



PHOTO BY LT. COL. ANTHONY BIONDO, COURTESY CIVIL AIR PATROL NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

CAP pilots flew more than 500,000 hours, logging 24 million miles in their own planes. They lost 64 aviators and 90 aircraft flying often dangerous missions around the country and offshore. They spotted 173 enemy submarines, attacked 57, hit 10 and sank two.

Air Force records on CAP casualties since its reorganization in May 1948 are sketchy and unreliable, according to Gary Woodsmall, CAP's safety chief.

"There were 14 fatalities between 1996 and August 2002," he said. "Two CAP flyers were killed in North Carolina as recently as July 17, 2002, and three more on Aug. 10 in Tennessee. All were engaged in Air Force-sponsored missions."

Sacrifices made by CAP aviators killed have been recognized by memorials around the country. The principle one is at Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia, dedicated Dec. 1, 1992. (It does not list names.)

Vital to Homeland Security

Leading CAP's homeland security mission is a career Air Force officer.

"Civil Air Patrol is uniquely positioned to assist in homeland security efforts," said national CAP Commander Air Force Brig. Gen. Richard Bowling. "We have more than 530 aircraft, 950 vehicles and thousands of trained volunteers. They stand ready to meet the challenge by preparing, preventing and responding to internal and external threats to the United States."

From CAP's national headquarters at Maxwell Air Force Base in Alabama, Bowling commands a civilian flying force of 60,000 trained volunteers in

1,700 units in the U.S. and Puerto Rico. CAP's air and ground outfits perform 85% of the Air Force's stateside search and rescue missions.

Flying is second nature to John J. Kittle, 55, a retired Air Force colonel and Vietnam War veteran who flew 210 combat missions. Kittle serves as CAP's chief of Counterdrug and Homeland Security from his office in Alexandria, Va. He's held that position since 1998, serving as liaison between CAP and federal agencies in the nation's capital.

Father of three children, Kittle said, "CAP will play a major role in homeland security. There is enthusiasm in Congress for CAP to get involved. Senators Tom Harkin and Joe Biden are strong supporters of our involvement. We can field an aircraft with highly trained volunteer air crews for an average cost of only \$90 per flying hour."

Indeed, the most active CAP member in Congress is Iowa Senator Tom Harkin, commander of CAP's Congressional Squadron.

North Carolina Wing's Lt. Col. Linwood Barkley surveys the damage after one of the Wing's Cessna C-172s crashed into a cotton field on July 17, 2002. Two Wing members and a sheriff's deputy were killed during the counter-drug mission near Edenton, N.C.

According to Kittle, "CAP also may receive funding at the state level for homeland security as well as at the federal level since the Department of Homeland Security has been approved."

Kittle said CAP can provide support for each of the six critical missions in the President's national security plan: intelligence and alarm warning, border and transportation security, domestic counter-terrorism, protecting critical infrastructure and key assets, defending against catastrophic threats and emergency preparedness and response.

One man who made a career of CAP service is Richard Greenhut, Northeast Region commander, who oversees nearly 11,000 volunteers on the Eastern seaboard.

Greenhut, 52, and his wife of 25 years, live in Manhattan. A CAP pilot since he was in high school more than 30 years ago, he began working for CAP in 1990.

As Greenhut pointed out, in fiscal year 2002 alone, CAP was directly responsible for saving 91 lives in the 50 states and Puerto Rico. He's confident CAP will get the support it needs to help with homeland defense. "Our supporters in Congress and the Air Force," Greenhut explained, "have always provided funding for us to get the job done."

Membership information is available from: CAP National Headquarters, 105 S. Hansell St., Bldg. 714, Maxwell Air Force Base, AL 36112-6332 or online at www.capnhq.gov. For potential sponsorship of Cadet groups or squadrons, call (334) 953-2828.

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VFW National Headquarters actively supports CAP by providing awards to cadets who demonstrate outstanding character traits. In 2001, 185 cadets in 17 states received awards with Florida in the lead. Last year, 18 VFW Departments participated.